

ALL-VOWEL HAWAIIAN WORDS

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Vowels are the backbone of any language for without them there can be no speech as we know it. A vowel, as opposed to a consonant, is a speech sound produced without stopping or obstructing the flow of air from the lungs. A second, familiar definition is any letter of the alphabet representing (or usually representing) the sound of a vowel. In English, as we learned in grade school, these letters are A, E, I, O, U and sometimes W and Y.

The English language relies heavily on the five common vowels. Take any printed page and upon tallying up all the A's, E's, I's, O's and U's, and you will arrive at about 40 per cent of all the letters on the page. It seems, then, that consonants merely fill in gaps and stop the English language from being a sing-song parade of voiced noises. In part this is correct, although it can be argued that just the reverse is true -- namely that vowels merely fill in the gaps between consonants. Observe the word D-ST-NG--SH-D. It is easy to tell that with the vowels inserted the word is DISTINGUISHED. However, it would be very difficult to infer this if you wrote only the vowels in their correct positions and used spaces for the missing consonants, obtaining -I--I--UI--E-.

We are consonant-oriented, not only because we give emphasis to consonants in the formation of words, but because a large majority of all our words are composed of a majority of consonants. Even simple three-letter words as CAT and DOG have 66.7 per cent consonants. Of all common words, perhaps STRENGTHS holds the record with 88.9 per cent consonants. Of less common words, the mathematical term NTH attains the ultimate 100 per cent.

At the opposite extreme, there are a handful of short words that are composed only of vowel sounds. A partial list includes A, AA, AH, AI, AY, AYE, EH, I, IO, O, OE, OH, OI, OII, OW, OWE and UH.

In contrast to English, the Hawaiian language is very definitely vowel-oriented. Of the twelve letters of the Hawaiian alphabet five are vowels! The list of words containing all vowels, instead of being a mere handful, is a copious collection of over 100. The complete list appears below and is extracted from the Hawaiian Dictionary (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1971), compiled by Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert. A short definition has been provided for each word. Hawaiian words are not difficult to pronounce; just remem-

ber that each vowel is pronounced individually except when it forms part of a diphthong combination. For example, the word AAUA, often written with glottal stops as 'A'AUA would be pronounced "ah-ow-ah". The native Hawaiian hardwood tree AALII is often written 'A'ALI'I and is pronounced "ah-ahlee-ee".

A List of Hawaiian Words Containing Only Vowels

A of	EEI filthy
AA lava	EEIAO ear
AAA network of veins	EEU to crawl
AAAA sweet potato	EI here
AAE harvested taro patch	EIA here is
AAEA infant's attention cry	EIA AE close by
AAI bright, as contrasting hues	EO to win
AAIA demented	EOE not
AAU to rove about	EOEO stone pile
AAUA coarse	EU to rise
AE kind of tree	E UE a chant ending
AEA to rise up	EUEU exciting
AEAE to stretch	
AEAEA small green fish	I while
AEI fine net	IA he; she
AEO stilts	IAIA him; her
AI food plant	IAO kind of fish
ALA there; there is	IAU me
ALAI dependent upon another	IE tapa beater
ALAlA impious	IEIE variety of taro
ALAU weary	IEIEA barbed
AIE to owe	II small
AIEA kind of Hawaiian shrub	IIAAO sour taro
AO daylight	IIAO kind of fish
AOA to bark	III very small
AOAO boundary	IO Hawaiian hawk
AOAOA small seaside shrub	IOIO rounded grooves in carving
AOE not	I OU to you
AOO elderly	IU you
AU era	IUI ceremonial term
AUA to observe	IUIU majestic
AUAU elderly man	
AUAUA wrinkled skin	O or
AUE alas	OA house rafter
AUI to digress	OAA fibrous
	OAAA fibrous
E by	OAAAA fibrous
EA independence	OAI to stir
EAAA burning air	OAI OAI to entwine
EIAE different	OAOA affectionate expression
EAEA air	OAU cat
EE to extend greetings	OE chanting sound
EEA to bob up and down	OEOE whistle
EEE mischievous	OEOEO tall and slender

OI to move	UAO to reconcile
OIA truth	UAOA mist
OIAI meanwhile	UAU to grate
OIAIO true	UAUA tough
OIOE tern	UAUAI to eat
OIOI to squirm	UE to twist
OIOIO to chirp	UEA wire
OO Hawaiian bird	UEUE to squirm
OO-AA Kauai honeyeater	UI to ask
OOE chant ending	UIA variety of taro
OOO stingy	UIUI to appeal
OOOO to crow	UO bunch of feathers
OU to float	UOA kind of fish
OUA small coconut	UOI to move along
OUAUA rainy	UOO tough
OUO young animal	UOOU sticky
OUOU sharp sound	UOUOA kind of fish
	UU unsheath
U groan	UUA slippery
UA rain	UUU to strip off
UAI to push aside	

It is interesting to note that nearly 10 per cent of these words -- AA, AEA, AO, AUE, IAO, IE, IEIE, IO, OO and OO-AA -- are listed above the line in boldface type in Webster's Second Edition. However, the Websterian meanings do not in all cases match the meanings given above, and the words are variously identified as Hawaiian, Polynesian and Samoan in origin.